

6 SOUND



Schindler's List (Steven Spielberg, 1993), music editing by Ken Wannberg

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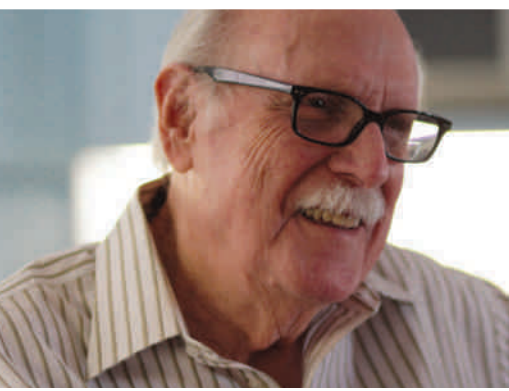
When we talk about “reading” a film, it implies looking and processing information acquired in that act, much like reading a book. But close reading in film also requires attention to the variety of sounds that accompany the images on-screen. These sounds are as carefully designed, produced, and edited as the images and are integral to a film’s meaning. (Indeed, one popular film journal is called *Sight and Sound*.)

Sound design is the careful composition of three main types of film sounds—spoken words, music, and sound effects. While some of these sounds are produced while the camera is rolling, most are recorded after a scene is shot and then synched with the visual track in postproduction. This chapter offers an introduction to the complex production and postproduction of film sound(s) and endeavors to more fully present a framework for the critical analysis of film as an *audio*-visual medium.

LEARNING OUTCOMES

After reading this chapter, you should be able to do the following:

- 6-1 Appreciate the complexity of sound design and some key relationships between sounds and images.
- 6-2 Analyze how different types of voice recordings (dialogue, voice-over, and direct address) are used to tell a story.
- 6-3 Understand the various uses and functions of music in a film’s soundtrack.
- 6-4 Recognize how sound effects contribute to the experience of watching a film.
- 6-5 Identify and analyze how sound design affects our interpretation of the events on-screen.



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KEN WANNBERG ON MUSIC EDITING

Ken Wannberg is a music editor who has worked extensively with the composer John Williams on some of the biggest box office films of all time. His music editing credits include *Star Wars* (George Lucas, 1977), *Raiders of the Lost Ark* (Steven Spielberg, 1981), *JFK* (Oliver Stone, 1991), *Schindler's List* (Spielberg, 1993), and *Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban* (Alfonso Cuarón, 2004). In 1986 Wannberg won an Emmy for his sound editing on Steven Spielberg's *Amazing Stories* series.

Q1: Could you talk a little about what a music editor does?

A: He works with the composer in postproduction, after the film is done. We run the film with the director and make “spotting” notes—identifying moments or cues where music will be used. I then make a detailed breakdown of those cues. . .break it down into hundredths of seconds. And that breakdown goes to the composer, and he writes the music using the notes and time-cues as a guide.

Q2: How does the director decide how to balance the voice track, the effects track, and the music track?

A: You have a dialog mixer, a sound effects mixer, and a music mixer. We put [the film] up on screen, and then the fight begins (figuratively speaking). The music department doesn't usually win. . .because music is abstract in film. Sound effects are more organic. It's part of the film. Whereas music is the intruder.

Q3: Is it difficult or complex to work with “source music” (pre-recorded popular music not written expressly for the film)?

A: The only hard part about source music is if you are fitting it into a scene, and you're dealing with phrases—eight-bar phrases, sixteen-bar phrases—you can't take a pop tune that everybody knows and murder it, cut it. So if you're trying to fit it into a scene, you only have so much latitude. It's really expensive to use source music. Take for example a “needle drop”. . .thirty seconds that you hear in the background, I mean that could be \$60,000. You've seen the “roll-ups” [credits] at the end of films. . .how many songs are listed there. . .multiply that out. . .it's a lot of money.

Q4: Are you trying to get audiences to react a certain way to a scene by orchestrating or strategically editing music?

A: Well, sure. But the film dictates what the music should be.

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6-1 SOUND AND IMAGE

The seamless integration of sound and image that we take for granted in contemporary films has its beginnings in the earliest filmmaking experiments. A full year before the first publicly exhibited, projected motion pictures, William Kennedy Laurie (W. K. L.) Dickson, working for the Edison Manufacturing Company, timed the operation of an Edison movie projector and an Edison phonograph to produce an early (albeit crude) sound film. Consistent with the “gee whiz” attraction of early cinema, the film focuses on the very production of movie sound, as we see Dickson playing a violin and two unidentified Edison employees dancing listlessly while a sound cylinder records the tune (fig. 6.1). Dickson’s process was ingenious but impractical; it depended too much on operator expertise and a little luck to get sound and image in synch.

While Dickson and some of Edison’s competitors searched for alternative ways to synchronize recorded sound and images, exhibitors hired musicians to play during screenings. This live music functioned much as background music functions today (more on this later in this chapter): it was used to signal rising action, highlight moments of romance or suspense, accompany changes in pace, and in a larger way to set an appropriate mood for the story told in the film. Silent films were never meant to be fully silent.

The movie routinely credited with ushering in sound is *The Jazz Singer*, the story of a cantor’s son who opts to sing jazz standards instead of the devotional music of his Jewish heritage. The film showcased



6.1 W. K. L. Dickson’s 15-second “experimental sound film” (1894). The sound recording device is featured prominently at left.

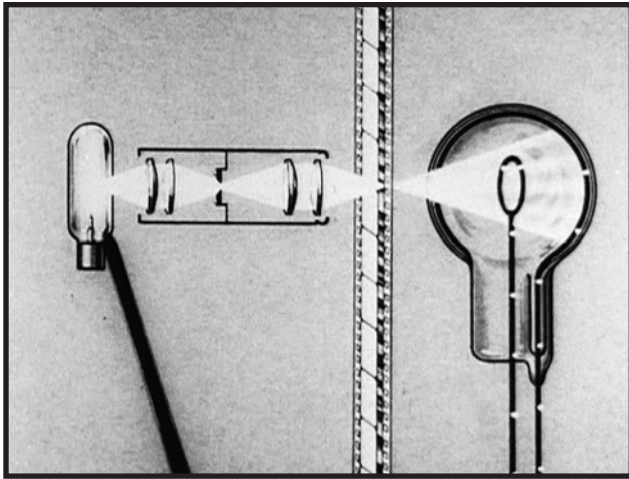
Warner Bros.’ Vitaphone, a sound-on-disc technology developed by Western Electric that synchronized sound recorded on a disc (like a record album) with moving images projected on-screen (figs. 6.2 and 6.3). To be accurate, *The Jazz Singer* was just one of several in a series of so-called hybrid sound films from Warner



6.2 The opening run of *The Jazz Singer* (Alan Crosland, 1927) at the Warner’s Theater in New York. Note the billboard above the marquee—“The Jazz Singer with Vitaphone”—and the lamentable image of Al Jolson in blackface, a popular but nonetheless racist posture for white jazz singers of the 1920s.



6.3 Between musical numbers, Al Jolson looks directly into the camera and quips: “Wait a minute . . . Wait a minute . . . You ain’t heard nothing yet.” It was a routine part of Jolson’s stage act to make such a promise—that there would be more songs and gags to follow; but in the context of film history, the line spoke to the massive industrial transition to come.



6.4 A diagram explaining how sound film works from the 1929 animated film *Finding His Voice*, produced by Max Fleischer (who also produced the Betty Boop and Popeye cartoons) and F. Lyle Goldman for Western Electric. The film's explanation is rudimentary but nonetheless offers a useful introduction to the new sound process. To paraphrase: Sound is a vibration. And that vibration can be photographed. A photographic record of that vibration appears in the form of a squiggly line on a piece of film. If you want to hear it back, you run a light through that squiggly line and those vibrations go to a speaker that reproduces the sound.

Bros. that mixed sequences containing synchronized dialogue and music with extended sequences shot as a silent film. Due in part to its star's performance and to the use of sound to highlight his songs, the film proved to be a popular sensation.

Filmgoer demand for more movie musicals like *The Jazz Singer*, and more sound films in general, motivated exhibitors to invest in amplifiers capable of filling a movie palace with sound and in film projectors that ran 24 frames per second instead of the 16 frames per second standard for silent film. (See figure 6.4 for an illustration of how sound projection works.) The changeover in projection equipment between 1926 and 1928 meant that silent films—no matter how popular they remained—would have to give way to “talkies.” By 1929 virtually every movie in America had synchronous sound.

The addition of recorded sound made movies more modern and more lifelike and more central to the

diegetic sound Sound that originates from within the story.

nondiegetic sound Music, words, or effects from outside the story world that shape our experience of the film but do not originate within scenes.

evolving American experience. Soviet filmmaker and theorist Sergei Eisenstein observed that synchronized sound allowed for a “synchronization of the senses”; after all, we experience the world not just through sight but through sound as well. It also established an integrative filmmaking practice in which sound was designed to function in concert with (and occasionally in contradiction to) the moving image. We will look at some basic relationships between sound and image before examining the individual components of the soundtrack in greater depth.

6-1a Diegetic and Nondiegetic Sounds

Sound that originates from within the world of the film, either from the characters or from the setting, is called **diegetic sound**. (As noted in chapter 2, the term *diegetic* derives from the Greek word for narrative.) **Nondiegetic sound** does not have a source in the world of the film. Most films abound in both diegetic and nondiegetic sounds. For example, in *Mean Streets* Martin Scorsese accompanies a fight in a poolroom with the pop song “Please Mr. Postman.” The song, we are told in the dialogue preceding the fight, is playing on the jukebox in the poolroom. It is diegetic; it has an identifiable source within the world of the film (fig. 6.5). Later in the film, we hear music as the main characters, Charlie and Johnny Boy, hide from the police. They are on the streets, yet we hear a flute, bass, and drum providing a brief jazz riff (fig. 6.6). The sound has no source in the world of the film; it is nondiegetic.

Diegetic sounds do not have to be produced and recorded during filming; indeed, many diegetic sounds are added in postproduction. In the poolroom scene, for example, Scorsese did not film the fight in one take. There are multiple camera setups and positions and several cuts in the scene. The production of the images involved several starts and restarts, but the music plays uninterrupted and at a perfectly modulated volume. The music was added in postproduction (and not sourced by a jukebox), but it is nonetheless diegetic.

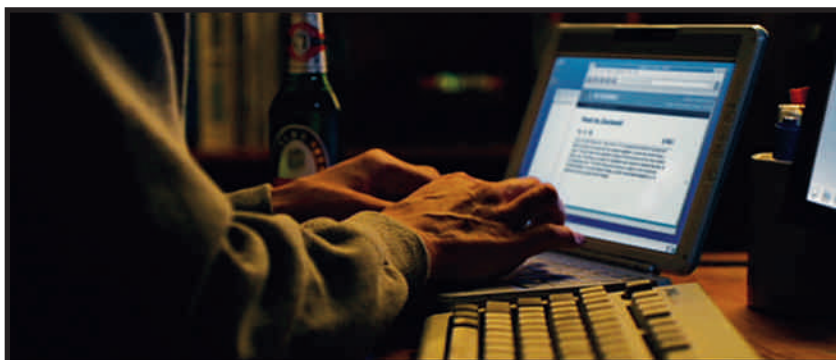
It is common for filmmakers to use diegetic and nondiegetic sounds in the same scene. For example, early in *The Social Network* we see Mark Zuckerberg furiously tapping on a keyboard, cracking the firewalls that protect the e-mails at various houses across Harvard's campus (fig. 6.7). Much of what makes this otherwise familiar image interesting and informative are the sounds, both diegetic and nondiegetic. We hear the sounds of Zuckerberg's fingers furiously tapping and



6.5 A poolroom fight in Martin Scorsese's *Mean Streets* (1973) is accompanied by diegetic sound—music with an identifiable source in the world of the film: a jukebox. The song we hear, the Marvelettes' 1961 hit "Please Mr. Postman," has no relationship to the events on-screen. It's a girl-group number about a young woman hoping to get a letter from her boyfriend, but its rollicking beat underscores the frenetic action of the poolroom scuffle.



6.6 As Charlie and Johnny Boy find a hideout, we hear a flute, bass, and drum providing a brief jazz riff that has no source in the scene. This nondiegetic sound underscores the clandestine nature of their actions. It also adds a hint of comedy to the scene, so we are not particularly worried that they will get caught.



snippets of dialogue between Zuckerberg and his business partner Eduardo. These diegetic sounds are accompanied by a pulsing electronic music score that gives the scene an upbeat pace and lighthearted tone. The music is not, we learn soon enough, playing inside the dorm room; indeed we hear the same music when we cut to a party at a frat house. The music forms a **sound bridge** that connects the scenes in time.

In addition to the diegetic dialogue between Zuckerberg and Eduardo, we hear Zuckerberg read what appears on the computer screen and explain how he hacks the system. This commentary is nondiegetic, even though it derives from the same source (the character Zuckerberg) as the diegetic sound; Zuckerberg doesn't say these words in that room at that moment in time. The combination of diegetic and nondiegetic sounds allows the filmmakers to play out a scene *and* comment on that scene at the same time.

Identifying diegetic and nondiegetic sounds in a scene serves a critical purpose in film analysis. Diegetic sound matches our experience of the scene with the experience of the same scene by the film characters. Nondiegetic sound generally offers a point of view on the action or it establishes mood and tone; in other words, nondiegetic sound guides our reading of a scene much as a narrator's description might in a work of literary fiction.

sound bridge A sound that connects two scenes. It could be a sound that carries over from one scene to the next or a sound from the second scene that is heard before the first scene ends.

6.7 A simple image, a complex use of diegetic and nondiegetic sounds. *The Social Network* (David Fincher, 2010).



6.8 “Tara is the only thing that matters.” Scarlett hears voices in her head (and we hear them too). *Gone with the Wind* (Victor Fleming, 1939).

6-1b On-Screen and Off-Screen Sounds

Another useful distinction for analysis is between on-screen and **off-screen** sources for the sounds in a scene. On-screen sources are those we can see within the frame—a couple arguing, a door slamming, a car screeching away. Off-screen sound comes from a source we can’t see. But unlike nondiegetic sound, we nonetheless acknowledge these off-screen sounds to be inside the world of the film—the sounds of the couple, the door, and the car heard while the camera stays focused on a child listening in her bedroom, for example. On-screen sounds create verisimilitude—the appearance of reality—while drawing our attention to various locations within the frame. Off-screen sound expands the space of the film beyond the frame and also allows the audience to identify more closely with the experiences

off-screen sound Sound that originates from a source that we cannot see but assume nonetheless to be part of the story world.

non-simultaneous sound Sound from the past or the future within the story world.

internal diegetic sound A character’s thoughts and memories, heard but not spoken aloud.

of certain characters, such as the child in the example above.

6-1c Simultaneous and Non-Simultaneous Sounds

Sound can expand film time as well as film space, as the concept of **non-simultaneous sound** illustrates. Simultaneous sound corresponds in time with what is happening in the frame; non-simultaneous sound comes from the narrative’s past or future. Non-simultaneous sound may represent memories, as when a character hears voices from the past that have influenced his or her way of thinking. At the end of *Gone with the Wind*, for example, Scarlett O’Hara ponders her future now that Rhett Butler has finally left her. We see her collapse on

the stairway, forlorn. But in this, her lowest moment, she hears the voices of the men in her life—Rhett, her father, and Ashley Wilkes—reminding her that “Tara is the only thing that matters” (fig. 6.8). Tara (the name of the former plantation), after all, has survived the Civil War and Reconstruction, the death of a child, and the loss of these three beloved men. Earlier in the story, when these lines were spoken directly to Scarlett, they were simultaneous; in this second iteration, they are non-simultaneous.

The simple message provided by the non-simultaneous sound helps pull Scarlett out of her funk. “After all,” she notes at the end of the film, “tomorrow is another day.” The device may by today’s standards seem hokey or corny, but it nonetheless presents something otherwise very difficult to show on-screen: what is going on inside a character’s head. This audible access to the internal workings of a character’s mind is called **internal diegetic sound**; its source is very much inside the world of the story, even if it does not come from the external setting.

Diegetic/nondiegetic, on-screen/off-screen, and simultaneous/non-simultaneous are just a few of the relationships that constitute the complex audiovisual experience provided by the medium of cinema. In the sections to follow, we will examine more closely the individual components of the soundtrack: voice, music, and sound effects.

6-2 THE VOICE TRACK

Filmmakers work with three general categories of sound—voice, music, and effects—each of which has unique expressive possibilities. The first, and in most films foremost, sound field is the voice track: actors, in character, read lines from a script, and these spoken words propel the film's story. Precisely how actors read these lines—alternatively called **line delivery** or **line reading**—can significantly affect meaning. Some actors, like Keanu Reeves, have characteristically flat line readings to signal disaffection, boredom, and detachment. Others, like Christopher Walken, indulge in more idiosyncratic line readings, often used to imply strangeness, even menace. Actors deliver lines at different volumes to suit different moods, motives, or narrative events. And even something as subtle as voice inflection, highlighting a word or phrase in a line of dialogue, can alter its meaning. “*You talking to me?*” “*You talking to me?*” “*You talking to me?*”

The voice track is generally reproduced for maximum clarity. There are exceptions to this rule, but in most films we are meant to hear and understand what people are saying both on- and off-screen. During exhibition in theaters equipped with multichannel sound, the voice track is often routed to speakers in the front of the auditorium so that it appears to come directly from the screen. This close connection between the image and voice tracks serves to highlight the importance of spoken words to the film experience.

6-2a Recording Dialogue

Dialogue—scripted or improvised conversation—can be, in certain controlled situations, recorded live on the set. Before a take commences, sound recordists routinely take in or record the “sound of the room” absent dialogue or movement. This so-called room tone is important later on during postproduction because it is used to provide a consistent or baseline background sound “presence” or atmosphere during sound editing (see section 6-5a). Once the room tone is recorded and the recording levels are set, the assistant director calls for quiet and the clapboard is brought in front of the



6.9 The clapboard marks the beginning of a take (scene 701, take 3) in *Contempt* (*Le Mépris*, 1963), Jean-Luc Godard's film about the making of a movie adaptation of *The Odyssey*.

camera. The board, or slate, identifies the scene and take number, and it is clapped to mark the synchronization of sound and image (fig. 6.9).

For the initial live recording of dialogue, filmmakers often mount a microphone on a long pole (called a boom or fishpole) that is held just out of frame and thus just outside the borders of the final printed shot (fig. 6.10). This type of microphone rig is particularly effective because it can pick up dialogue as it might be heard if we, the filmgoer, were somehow in the space of the scene (but just off camera, like the mike).

Live sound is recorded onto the film and also on a separate medium (analog audiotape, or a digital medium like digital tape or compact disc, or on a computer hard drive), which is called double-system recording—an industry standard for live sound capture. But even with double-system recording, it is not always possible to adequately capture synchronous dialogue live on the set. A number of variables can compromise the clarity of the initial voice recording: ambient or random sounds (especially outside, on location), the noise created as characters move about the set, and the relative volume and pitch of each actor's line delivery. As a consequence, the live recorded dialogue is considered a *guide track*, the first step in the process of producing a final vocal

line delivery the way in which an actor says the words from the script; also called **line reading**.

dialogue Words spoken between two or more characters.



6.10 A conversation recorded with a single microphone attached to a boom, or fishpole microphone, seen here dangling just above the actress Alexis Smith's head, in the Cole Porter bio-pic *Night and Day* (Michael Curtiz, 1946).



6.11 A Warner Bros. sound recordist adjusting the levels during the voice recording in the same scene from *Night and Day*.

track. When the guide track is not of an acceptable quality, the actors are asked to record their lines again in a studio. There they watch the footage on a monitor so that their delivery matches the movement of their lips on-screen. This process is called **dubbing**, or **looping**,

dubbing The process of rerecording dialogue and synchronizing it with shots; also known as **looping**.

fourth wall The imaginary wall or barrier between the audience and the characters that creates the illusion of a separate story world.

direct address A type of speech in which the character breaks the fourth wall and speaks to the camera or audience.



6.12 What the projector “sees”: Note the soundtracks at the left of the image. Porter is in a military hospital and by chance meets an old flame. He remarks, “3,000 miles, three years and all of a sudden, you,” to which his future wife smiles and replies, tongue-in-cheek, “I had it all planned that way.” The dialogue accomplishes two things: it feeds into and off of a familiar romantic trope in Hollywood film (the chance meeting, true love as a product of fate), and it depicts larger-than-life characters (played by movie stars) who act “cool” in even the most anxious moments.

and in contemporary postproduction it is performed by a technique called ADR (automatic dialogue replacement). While not always necessary, ADR is generally superior to sound recorded on the set or on location.

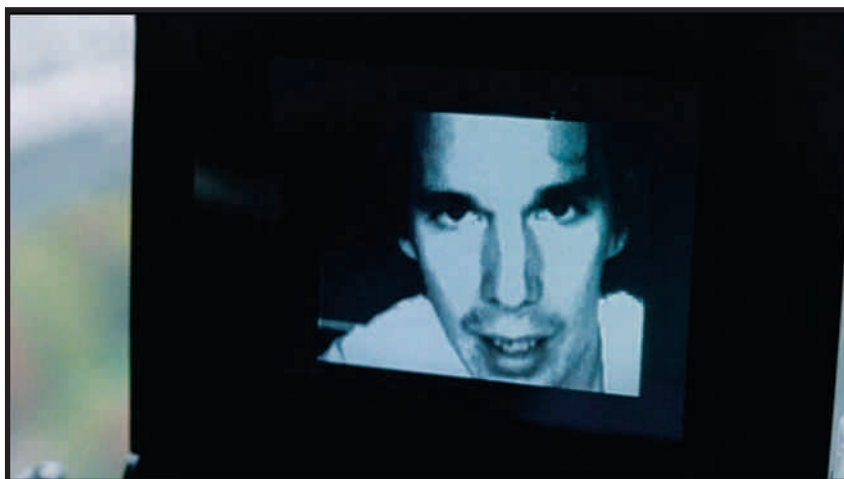
The recording and rerecording processes are almost always designed and executed to highlight what the filmmakers want us to hear and what they want us to pay specific attention to. That is why dialogue is mostly audible and comprehensible. And when it is not, it is not for a reason. How well or poorly we hear what people are saying is not an accident. It is the result of sound mixing, not sound recording—a topic discussed in detail later in this chapter.

6-2b Direct Address

In a play, when a character breaks the so-called **fourth wall** (separating the audience from the world depicted on stage) and speaks directly to the audience, it is called **direct address**. This breach of the fourth wall is accomplished in film when a character looks directly into the camera and speaks to the viewer. Direct address interrupts the flow of the film and for a moment at least implies an awareness on the part of the fictional characters that they are in a film or at least that an audience is watching and listening to them.



6.13 The director Michael Almereyda offers a contemporary presentation of Hamlet's famous soliloquy. We hear "To be or not to be . . ." and see that Hamlet is pondering suicide. *Hamlet* (2000).



6.14 A play on direct address: the camera records Hamlet as he speaks into the camera.



6.15 Hamlet is framed by calls to "action" as he looks directly into the camera and ponders his fate.

In a number of the film adaptations of Shakespeare's plays, movie directors have opted to use direct address to frame a soliloquy, a key passage from a play in which a character moves to the front of the stage (the foreground of the frame) and speaks directly to the audience. In more traditional adaptations like Laurence Olivier's *Richard III* (1955) and Oliver Parker's *Othello* (1995), direct address allows characters to take us into their confidence, making us complicit in their nefarious plots or letting us in on their inner torment.

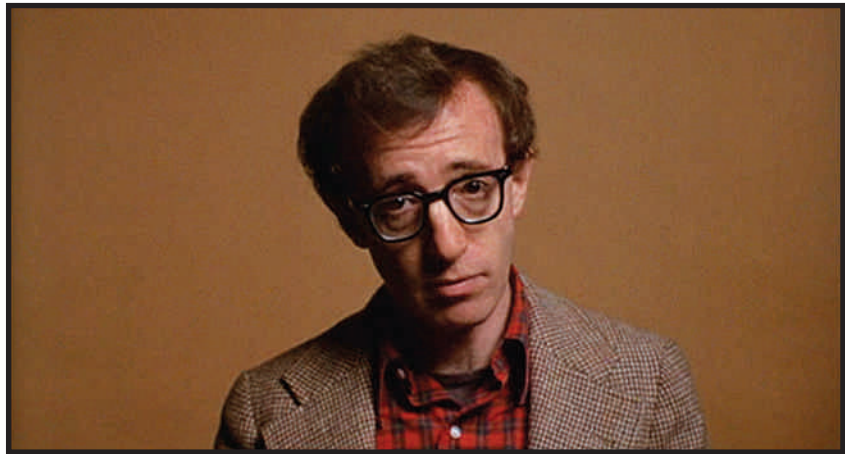
In Michael Almereyda's *Hamlet*, variation on direct address is used to stage the soliloquies. For example, when Hamlet ruminates "To be or not to be," Almereyda stages the soliloquy in a series of three formal frames, the last two of which involve direct address. First, we find Hamlet in his apartment looking at a recorded image of himself on a monitor, gun to his temple, delivering the first few lines of the soliloquy (fig. 6.13). A second image offers a clever variation on traditional filmic direct address. As Hamlet starts the speech over and again intones "To be or not to be," he looks directly back at us, albeit captured and framed on a small TV screen within the larger film screen we watch (fig. 6.14). The effect at once distances us (it is an image within an image) and reprises the initial image of Hamlet appearing trapped, with no way out of the screen that holds him. In the third staging, Hamlet delivers the full soliloquy, again looking directly into the camera (fig. 6.15). This setting offers an ironic comment on his lines; he is in a DVD store where every film falls under the category "action," while the lines he delivers make clear that action is precisely what Hamlet, so far at least, has been unable to muster.

Direct address is often used in comedies to reproduce the dynamics of a stand-up routine. Woody Allen's *Annie Hall*, for example, opens with Allen's semi-autobiographical character Alvy

in medium close-up (fig. 6.16) telling a joke that rather neatly fits the writer-director's attitude towards his (and Alvy's) life: "Two elderly women are at a Catskill Mountain resort. And one of them says: 'Boy, the food at this place is really terrible.' The other one says, 'Yes, I know, and such small portions.' Well, that's essentially how I feel about life. Full of loneliness and misery and suffering and unhappiness, and it's all over much too quickly."

In his first feature, *She's Gotta Have It*, Spike Lee gives each of his major characters extended **monologues** framed in direct address, using a technique borrowed not from stand-up comedy but from documentary filmmaking. The effect is nonetheless comic. The three principle male characters—Mars, Jamie, and Greer—have one thing in common, their affection for the film's central female character, the aptly named Nola Darling. Each of these characters uses direct address to convince the filmgoer that he is the right man for Nola and then to comment upon his eventual and inevitable failure to capture and keep her interest. Lee uses direct address so extensively that it doesn't so much disrupt the narrative flow as offer comment upon and counterpoint to it. Early in the film, for example, he quickly summarizes Nola's predicament through a series of direct address cameos of men (not the main characters) delivering an array of lame pick-up lines (figs. 6.17 and 6.18). Here the director offers a neat variation on the technique; the men look at the camera and are photographed alone in the frame (typical of direct address), but the lines they deliver are meant for Nola. Complex as this sound technique may be, the point is fairly simple: Nola's presence here is unnecessary; these lines would hardly work on her.

monologue A lengthy speech by one character.



6.16 Alvy Singer/Woody Allen opening *Annie Hall* (Woody Allen, 1977) with a joke filmed/staged as direct address.



6.17 "You so fine, baby, I'd drink a tub of your bathwater." *She's Gotta Have It* (Spike Lee, 1986).



6.18 "Congress has just approved me to give you my heat- and moisture-seeking MX missile."

6-2c Voice-Over Narration

Much like direct address, **voice-over narration** simulates the action of a narrator (who may also be a character in the story) speaking directly to us, providing context for and commentary on the story. But unlike with direct address, we do not see the character as he or she speaks. Indeed the lines are intended for the film audience and are not heard by other characters in the story, which makes voice-over narration nondiegetic.

Voice-over is often used in literary adaptations in which verbatim passages from the original text are “read into” the film. In *The Assassination of Jesse James by the Coward Robert Ford*, for example, the actor Hugh Ross, who has no on-screen role, reads selected passages from the Ron Hansen novel of the same title (fig. 6.19).

The pulp detective stories told in many 1940s and 1950s films noir often feature first-person voice-over in which the main character recalls his or her story of betrayal or self-deception. In Billy Wilder’s adaptation of James Cain’s notorious novel *Double Indemnity*, for example, colorful, tough-guy voice-over runs through the entire film. As with many films noir, the film moves from a monologue (the character speaking into a Dictaphone) to a voice-over that corresponds to a shift in narrative time from the seeming present to the past. This device allows the story to unfold on-screen as it is told in retrospect, in flashback. First we see the insurance agent Walter Neff, a bullet in his chest, headed to his office well after hours. He loads the Dictaphone and begins an “office memorandum” to his boss: “I killed Dietrichson . . . yes I killed him. I killed him for money and for a woman. I didn’t get the money. I didn’t get the woman” (fig. 6.20). At this point in the story we don’t know who Dietrichson is, nor do we know Walter, the film’s luckless male lead. Though it shows us the end of the story first, this early monologue is used as a hook of sorts, not only into a narrative that will end with Walter dying as he confesses a murder we by then have seen him commit but also to a way of telling the story (in Walter’s words) and reading the story (as it regards Walter, the insurance agent who killed a man for money and a woman and in the end got neither).

As we cut away from the insurance office to a Los Angeles street, we continue to hear Walter’s monologue



6.19 “He was growing into middle age and was living then in a bungalow on Woodland Avenue.” Third-person voice-over accompanies the introduction of Brad Pitt as Jesse James in *The Assassination of Jesse James by the Coward Robert Ford* (Andrew Dominik, 2007).

narrating the action on-screen, action that corresponds to the story he is telling, action that has already taken place (fig. 6.21). We then shift from non-simultaneous sound to simultaneous sound, from voice-over to synched dialogue when Walter enters the Dietrichson house and gets his first look at Phyllis wearing only a towel at the top of the stairs (fig. 6.22).

In some films, voice-over denotes a mastery of sorts; a character shares with us a story only he or she fully understands. In *Double Indemnity*, voice-over offers a critique of such a mastery and reveals the hubris at the heart of the hero’s story. Such is the context for the voice-over of the dying or dead man, a key element in Wilder’s subsequent noir, the 1950 Hollywood melodrama *Sunset Boulevard*, which is narrated by a dead man lying face down in a pool (fig. 6.23).

In these two films directed by Wilder, voice-over is a deliberate strategy, one that appears in the films’ original scripts. However, this is not the case with all films that employ voice-over. Because sound can be added late in postproduction, well after the production crew has moved on and the sets have been struck, voice-over is occasionally used to fix problems that crop up after test screenings, especially when test audiences complain that an early cut of a film is too difficult to follow. Such was the case with two well-known American films, *Apocalypse Now* (Francis Ford Coppola, 1979) and *Blade Runner*.

After poor test screenings, United Artists prevailed upon Coppola to add a voice-over track to *Apocalypse*

voice-over narration Lines spoken by a narrator that are nondiegetic.



6.20 Walter Neff delivering his confession via Dictaphone in Billy Wilder's 1944 film noir, *Double Indemnity*. This opening scene sets up the extensive voice-over that follows.



6.22 The voice-over subsides and we get a subjective shot of Phyllis from Walter's point of view.



6.21 We continue to hear Walter talking into the Dictaphone as we see the scene he is narrating. Walter is both the narrator of (through voice-over) and a character in this scene (that's him at the center of the frame heading from his car to Phyllis Dietrichson's door).



6.23 "Well, this is where you came in." Just minutes before the film ends, we discover that we've watched a movie narrated by a dead man. *Sunset Boulevard* (Billy Wilder, 1950).



6.24 What we see when we first hear Deckard's voice-over in the 1982 studio version of *Blade Runner* (Ridley Scott): "They don't advertise for killers in the newspaper. That's my profession. Ex-cop. Ex-blade runner. Ex-killer."

Now to help audiences follow the director's hectic, hallucinatory representation of the Vietnam War. The director complied and hired the noted Vietnam War journalist Michael Herr to write the voice-over. The lines are read by the conflicted hero of the film, Captain Willard, who becomes through this voice-over the first-person narrator of the film. (This addition created another parallel between Willard and Marlow, the first-person narrator in Joseph Conrad's novella *Heart of Darkness*, upon which the film is based.) Herr's voice-over adds authenticity, a monologue insisting on the reality of the war from the viewpoint of someone who was there.

The voice-over added to *Blade Runner* works less well, or at least it more fundamentally changes the director's vision. When Scott added voice-over late in

postproduction, he too used first-person commentary from the hero's point of view. But while the voice-over makes a difficult narrative easier to navigate, it turns the film into a noir detective story (fig. 6.24). Ten years after the studio version was released, a "director's cut" absent voice-over was released theatrically. Without narration, the film more closely resembles its source, *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep*, a science fiction novel by Philip K. Dick. The director's cut challenges audiences to sort out the hero's conflicts (as he questions his role as a blade runner, as a killer of androids) and the larger thematic questions raised by the novel about what constitutes humanity. It is a very different film, and offers an object lesson in the net effect of voice-over in film narrative.

6-3 MUSIC

Well before audiences heard movies talk, music was a key part of the filmgoing experience. The term *silent film* is, as discussed earlier in this chapter, misleading because these early movies were never intended to be screened in silence. Musical accompaniment was provided by a small orchestra or, at smaller venues, by a lone piano or organ player. The music was wholly improvised, improvised from a series of prescribed or familiar musical motives or themes, or read from a prescribed score, as in screenings of D. W. Griffith's epic about the Reconstruction era, *Birth of a Nation* (1915). With the advent of synchronized sound, filmmakers continued to use music as a background to the action while also developing stories where music became integral to the characters' lives.

6-3a Background Music

The principal music track for most movies is the **score**, a musical accompaniment written specifically for the film. The composer of the score generally writes this music to suit already filmed scenes. The process corresponds directly to the function of this movie music; it is written and operates very much as a commentary on the images we see on-screen.

Though it comes late in the postproduction process, the score can have a significant effect on how we interpret a given scene. The beat, a mellifluous or dissonant harmonic scheme, and even the choice of musical instruments can be significant to the feeling we get, to our attitude towards the action on-screen. This music may be simple,

like John Carpenter's minimalist electronic score for *Halloween* (1978), which involves the simple repetition of staccato notes. Carpenter strategically varies the time signature, picking up the pace to match a particularly tense moment in the film. Or it can be lush and orchestral, as in Max Steiner's score for *Gone with the Wind*.

The score functions primarily as nondiegetic background music. This background music is called underscoring because it underscores (highlights, punctuates, cues, or comments upon) the story as it plays out on-screen. To appreciate how underscoring works, let's consider Max Steiner's score for the epic *Gone with the Wind*. Steiner's score uses both original music and themes and variations from **stock music** from the antebellum and Civil War periods, including ten Stephen Foster songs, among them "The Old Folks at Home" and "My Old Kentucky Home"; Civil War standards like "The Battle Hymn of the Republic" and "When Johnny Comes Marching Home"; and spirituals like "Go Down, Moses." The stock music helps establish the historical context, and each song is associated with certain emotions as well. For example, when the camera pans across a field of Southern war dead, we hear an orchestral adaptation of "Taps," the mournful military song played at funerals (fig. 6.25).

score A nondiegetic musical accompaniment written specifically for a film.

stock music Preexisting music that is repurposed for a score.

In addition to his adaptations and variations on stock music, Steiner's original music offers a compelling backdrop to the roiling melodrama concerning the quixotic Scarlett O'Hara and the two men she loves and loses, Ashley Wilkes and Rhett Butler. In the large-scale historical scenes, Steiner's orchestral score is sumptuous and rousing. To accompany the burning of Atlanta, Steiner scores fast descending and ascending scales to suggest the sound of wind and flames (fig. 6.26). In the intimate scenes between Scarlett and Rhett on their honeymoon, Steiner softens the mood with an adaptation of Isaac B. Woodbury's lovely "Stars of the Summer Night," a mid-nineteenth-century devotional song (fig. 6.27). When Scarlett and Rhett have one of their many heated arguments, Steiner highlights the strings and strategically heightens the pitch and volume of the music to emphasize the emotional impact of the scene.

Steiner also builds a repeated melody or theme into his score in order to establish a **musical motif**. The key (and by now legendary) musical motif in the film is Steiner's "Tara's Theme," named for Scarlett's plantation home and symbol of the Old South. Composed of eighteen notes played in sets of four, four, six, and then four again, the theme is introduced in the opening title sequence and then recurs in variation throughout the film. When it is used to accompany a scene in which Rhett and Scarlett celebrate their new marriage and their postwar wealth, the theme sounds positively triumphant. But the same motif played softer and in a different key has a more nostalgic effect in a scene of postwar hardship. Much like opera composers, film composers use repeated themes or motifs to connect scenes at different points in a film; for example, the shark theme in *Jaws* that plays whenever the shark is near. The composer John Williams's simple motif for the shark becomes so familiar in the film that when we hear it, we don't need to see the shark to know he's there (fig. 6.28).

Motifs can be so strongly tied to a certain cultural property—a familiar TV show or movie franchise—that it simply must be used in any new version or adaptation. For example, for the 2009 reboot of the *Star Trek* series, a twenty-person music department and a full orchestra were employed to provide music for the film (fig. 6.29). But the centerpiece for the score was still an adaptation of Alexander Courage's familiar *Star Trek* theme first introduced for the TV series in 1966. We hear that theme revisited and then expressed in musical variations throughout the film. The challenge for the music



6.25 Over this extreme long shot of the Southern war dead, we hear "Taps." *Gone with the Wind* (Victor Fleming, 1939).



6.26 The orchestra performs descending and ascending scales to underscore the fires set by General Sherman during his infamous march to the sea.



6.27 Scarlett and Rhett's honeymoon on a riverboat begins on a peaceful note, thanks to the background music: Isaac B. Woodbury's spiritual "Stars of the Summer Night."

musical motif A brief and recurring pattern of notes.



6.28 Perhaps the most familiar music cue in American film history: the shark theme in *Jaws* (Steven Spielberg, 1975) announces the arrival of the great white. The film audience knows what's on the hook before these fishermen do, and the suspense builds.



6.29 A full orchestra performs the familiar *Star Trek* theme and variations for J. J. Abrams's 2009 franchise reboot. Note the screen directly in front of the conductor, which includes scenes from the film over which the music will be played.



6.30 Afro-beat music on the soundtrack accompanies a riot in Mogadishu, Somalia. *Black Hawk Down* (Ridley Scott, 2001).

department working on this 2009 film was to maintain continuity from the TV show, through the previous film adaptations, on to the new film (the reboot).

Music can be used to establish a time and place and feeling, as in *Black Hawk Down*, Ridley Scott's film about the failed U.N. peacekeeping mission in Somalia in 1993. In order to establish the African locale, the background music scored by Hans Zimmer offers evocative variations on Afro-Beat music (fig. 6.30). The music does well to give filmgoers a feel for the pulse and rhythm of such an exotic and dangerous place. The complex drum beat is incessant beneath vocals that alternate between chanting, call-and-response gospel, and blues-inflected funk. The music reminds us that we, like the American soldiers, are strangers in a strange land.

6-3b The Pop Music Soundtrack

Filmmakers may choose to use previously recorded popular music rather than or in addition to commissioning original scores. Pop music can be non-diegetic or it can have its source in the world of the story. A common instance of diegetic pop music are scenes in contemporary films that feature characters lip-synching or dancing to music playing on the radio or on a stereo: for example, Tom Cruise as the idle teenager Joel Goodsen dancing in his underwear to Bob Seger singing "Old Time Rock and Roll" in *Risky Business* (fig. 6.31). The dance and lip-synch number is preceded by a shot showing Joel turning on the stereo, making sure the filmgoer registers the source of the music we hear.

The "Old Time Rock and Roll" scene in *Risky Business* is used to make a simple point: Joel is alone and a little bored, and though he doesn't quite know how, he wants to let loose. Later in the film, Joel merges his aptitude for



6.31 Tom Cruise as Joel Goodsen, celebrating his parents' departure for vacation by lip-synching and dancing to "Old Time Rock and Roll" in *Risky Business* (Paul Brickman, 1983).



6.32 Joel feels briefly all grown up, a man pimping on the mean streets of Chicago. The nondiegetic use of the Muddy Waters's blues standard "Mannish Boy" is deeply ironic: Joel is still very much what the singer claims he is not: a mannish boy, playacting at adulthood.

business administration with a nascent interest in Lana, a Chicago prostitute, whom he briefly agrees to pimp out to his friends. He is ill-suited for the job but nonetheless feels briefly adult and rather cool. As he struts down the street, we hear Muddy Waters's blues classic "Mannish Boy" (fig. 6.32). The pop song is nondiegetic; no music is audible on the street at that time. It is used to comment on Joel's feeling of being fully grown up, and it also highlights the film's location, Chicago, Illinois, where Waters lived and played for over four decades. The song is also used ironically. The singer boasts that he is a man, no longer "a mannish boy." Joel at this moment in the film feels much the same way, but we know that he is not really a man and, moreover, that

he has no appreciation or understanding of the subculture Muddy Waters embodies and speaks to.

A far more complexly integrated use of diegetic pop music can be heard in George Lucas's *American Graffiti*. The early sixties music that plays throughout the film sets the place and time (cruising the strip in a typical American town, Modesto, California, in 1962), and its pervasive presence in the film aptly underscores the importance of popular music in the lives of the film's teenage characters. Though the music was all postproduced, a source for each song exists within the space of the film: the band at the high school hop, the AM radio blaring from the cruising cars, or the jukebox at the drive-in diner. Lucas selects the songs carefully to match the on-screen images; indeed, the songs to a great extent narrate the film. For example, we hear "Why Do Fools Fall in Love" when Curt first sees the mysterious blonde in the white T-Bird; a ballad about breaking up ("Smoke Gets in Your Eyes") plays when Steve and Laurie talk about dating other people and then are coerced into a spotlight dance at the hop (fig. 6.33); "Maybe Baby" accompanies the underage Toad's attempt to get someone to buy liquor for him; "Since I Don't Have You" is the tune we hear when Laurie, forlorn after breaking up with Steve, gets into a car with the hot-rodder Falfa just before the big race; and Lucas uses "You're a Thousand Miles

Away" when Curt tries to find DJ Wolfman Jack, who, it turns out, is encamped close by.

Some directors use nondiegetic pop music to signal a transition from one scene to another, from one mood to another, from one character to another. In the closing sequence of *A Prophet*, the director Jacques Audiard uses an unusual version of the pop standard "Mack the Knife" to take us from one story, place, and mood to another. The film tells the story of Malik El Djebena, an Arab immigrant who plays all the angles in prison and in the end is released as something of an organized-crime kingpin. Though he has gotten to this place of authority through murder, betrayal, and a surfeit of financial and personal



6.33 Steve and Laurie's spotlight dance in *American Graffiti* (George Lucas, 1973). Steve wants to date other people when he goes off to college, and Laurie knows what that means. On the soundtrack we hear the romantic ballad "Smoke Gets in Your Eyes" performed by the Platters, a song about breaking up.



6.34 Malik (left) walks out the prison gate a free man. On the soundtrack we hear Jimmy Dale Gilmour's slow and sweet rendition of the Kurt Weill/Bertolt Brecht ballad "Mack the Knife." The nondiegetic pop song is meant to signal an end to Malik's harrowing time behind bars. *A Prophet* (*Un prophète*, Jacques Audiard, 2009).

backstabbing, we feel exhilarated at his release from prison and see the promise for better times for this character. As Malik exits the prison into the sunlight, we hear Jimmy Dale Gilmour's slow and sweet rendition of the Kurt Weill ballad (fig. 6.34). The song lightens, suddenly, a film that had for well over two hours been unremittingly dark.

6-3c Musicals

With the introduction of sound at the end of the 1920s came the advent of the movie musical, a genre dependent upon the integrated use of music in the telling of a film's story.

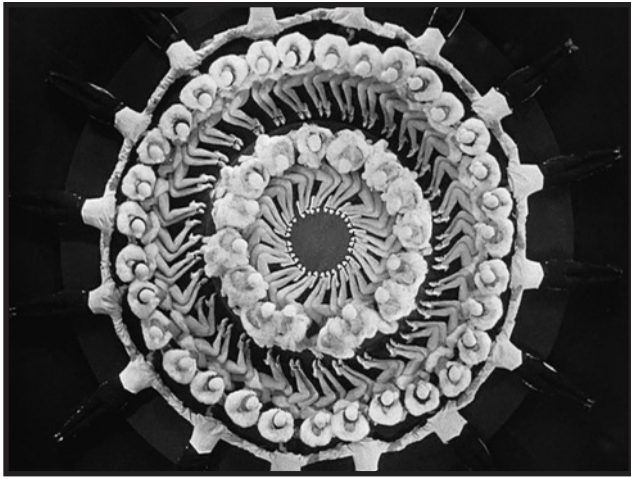
Two distinct subgenres of the Hollywood movie musical were introduced early on: the backstage musical and the musical comedy. In the **backstage musical**, the musical performances are staged in a revue format. They are quite simply rehearsed and performed on a stage. The songs are not integrated into the plot of the film. Indeed the drama and romance that composes the plot of the film are wholly separate from the performances. In contrast, people in **musical comedies** stop talking and start singing, and implausible as such an action may be, these performances are very much part of the story told in the film.

Among the first and most memorable of the backstage musicals was *42nd Street*, in which a down-on-his-luck director works to put together a show that will bring fortune and fame to everyone involved in the Depression-era production. The movie appears to be two films at once because that is exactly what it is—two films by two very different directors. In a manner consistent with the gritty, realist Warners' house style, Lloyd Bacon directed the melodramatic backstage scenes. But what makes the film so remarkable are choreographer Busby Berkeley's set-pieces, the kaleidoscopic and surreal musical numbers that Berkeley shot from a variety of camera placements in front, behind, and above the action (figs. 6.35 and 6.36).

Rouben Mamoulian's *Applause* (1929)—the story of an aging burlesque star—was the first full-length Hollywood musical. Three years later Mamoulian followed this backstage musical with *Love Me Tonight*, a musical-comedy featuring songs by Richard Rogers and Lorenz Hart (including "Mimi," and "Isn't It Romantic?") integrated into the story of a tailor who, in an

backstage musical A subgenre of musicals in which the song and dance numbers are not integrated into the story.

musical comedy A subgenre of musicals in which characters break into song to express their feelings.



6.35 and 6.36 Al Dubin and Harry Warren's "Young and Healthy" is given the full Busby Berkeley treatment in the early Warner Bros. musical *42nd Street* (Lloyd Bacon, 1933).

effort to collect a debt from an irresponsible count, ventures to the nobleman's country estate, where he meets and falls in love with a princess. The tailor charms the princess, first in song and then with his skill with a needle and thread. In play are several elements that would become formulaic in later musical-comedy films: the fiery heroine, whose immediate rejection of the hero is a sign of attraction; the notion that persistence gets the girl; and the easy class reconciliation (it doesn't matter if you're rich or poor so long as you're in love).

The songs in *Love Me Tonight* are so cleverly integrated into the storyline that when characters burst into song, it seems like a natural expression of their emotions. For example, when Maurice, the tailor, first meets the Princess Jeanette, he sings the naughty little song "Mimi" because, quite simply, he's in love (fig. 6.37). Later in the film, the song is picked up and in succession performed by members of the princess's household, each one taken in by Maurice's masquerade (as a mysterious count) and in their own way energized by the power of love (fig. 6.38).

The movie musical has a long and rich history, and audiences in 1929 and 2012 alike willingly suspend disbelief as they enter a world in which characters break out in song. Sometimes the music is integral to aspects of performance, as in the RKO films featuring Fred Astaire and Ginger Rogers (*The Gay Divorcee*, Mark Sandrich, 1934), in which musical numbers offer a narrative rationale for the couple to dance. In others, performance is an aspect of the narrative, as in *Singing in the Rain* (Stanley Donen and Gene Kelly, 1952), which chronicles the professional and personal lives of a movie-star couple set against the movie industry's transition to sound. Here again the music is still the



6.37 Maurice bursts into song because he's in love. *Love Me Tonight* (Rouben Mamoulian, 1932).



6.38 No one can resist singing the catchy song "Mimi."



6.39 When the otherwise peaceful suburbanites of South Park break into song, they perform the bad-taste anthem “Blame Canada.” The film and the TV series upon which it is based incorporate song and dance numbers much as live-action musicals do. *South Park: Bigger, Longer & Uncut* (Trey Parker, 1999).

context (and excuse) for the dance numbers featuring Kelly, Debbie Reynolds, Donald O’Connor, Cyd Charisse, and Rita Moreno.

Broadway musicals—plays first performed on stage then adapted for the screen—are among the most popular films ever made in Hollywood: for example, *West Side Story* (Jerome Robbins and Robert Wise, 1961), *The Sound of Music* (Robert Wise, 1965), and *Chicago* (Rob Marshall, 2002). The musical has also been important to the evolution of the animated feature, beginning in 1937 with *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs*, and subsequently at Disney with *The Little Mermaid* (Ron Clements and John Musker, 1989), and *Beauty and the Beast* (Gary Trousdale and Kirk Wise, 1991). Animated musicals now include the R-rated satires *South Park: Bigger, Longer & Uncut* (fig. 6.39) and *Team America: World Police* (Trey Parker, 2004), which attest to the flexibility of the genre.

ger, Longer & Uncut (fig. 6.39) and *Team America: World Police* (Trey Parker, 2004), which attest to the flexibility of the genre.

6-4 SOUND EFFECTS

Sound effects are used primarily to contribute to the filmgoer’s experience of the film’s setting and action as real. As filmgoers, we expect the things we see on-screen to make the sounds we expect them to make. A car drives by, and we hear the engine’s growl. We see the ocean and hear the dull roar of waves. We see a dog, and we hear him bark. Even if the actual source of the sound is not the same car, beach, or dog that we see on-screen, we nonetheless remain convinced of the fictional world depicted in the film.

Effects need not be realistic, which is to say that our movie experience need not match real experience; it need only match our expectations, some of which have been produced by previous experiences at the movies. What, for example, might a firefight with futurist weapons sound like (fig. 6.40)? The challenge is not to reproduce a real sound (since no such sound exists) but to provide a

sound taken from our collective experience as filmgoers. The challenge is to provide the dramatic feel for the event, even though the action we see on-screen is something we have never and will never experience.



6.40 A firefight in *Starship Troopers* (Paul Verhoeven, 1997). What might these future weapons sound like?



6.41 Foley artist Dennie Thorpe (standing in front of the screen at the center of the picture) was assigned the task of simulating the sound of a baby dinosaur's birth in *Jurassic Park* (Steven Spielberg, 1993).



6.42 Thorpe's challenge was to create these sounds: the dinosaur egg cracking, the newborn emerging from the shell, and the scientist cleaning the baby off.



6.43 Using grocery store items, Thorpe created sounds that matched the images on-screen. She scraped together two waffle ice-cream cones to re-create the sound of the egg cracking, pulled at the pulp of a ripe cantaloupe to simulate the wet sound of the baby emerging from the egg (shown above), and then rubbed the rough skin of a pineapple to match the scratchy sound of the scientist cleaning the newborn's rough skin.

in a 1975 film might be used again in a similarly set scene in a very different motion picture made thirty-five years later. There would be no way for the filmgoer to recognize this bit of sound sampling.

When no recorded sound source exists—because the sound itself is produced by an imaginary object, such as a spaceship or ray gun, or because the real sound is not convincing or sufficiently dramatic—the **Foley artist** steps in. Named for Jack Foley, a trailblazing sound-effects specialist who worked uncredited on movies from the 1920s through the 1960s, the Foley process is fairly simple but effective. The Foley artist watches a scene and, using simple actions and simple objects, matches or simulates appropriate sounds in real time (see figs. 6.41–6.43).

Foley crews include the Foley artist, or “walker”—footsteps are the most frequently Foleyed sounds in post-production—and the sound recordists. To reproduce the sound of footsteps, the Foley artist must simulate the gait of an actor and must do so on a surface (cement, dirt, etc.) that matches the scene on-screen. Most Foley stages have multiple walking tracks and can look a bit like a cluttered attic with everyday objects littered about. An old phone book can be dropped on a cement floor to simulate the sound of a punch. Two coconuts can be clapped together to simulate the sound of horse hooves (fig. 6.44). The art of Foley is a key aspect of so-called movie magic, a behind-the-scenes technique that enhances the reality and realism of a scene.

6-4a Producing Sound Effects

A movie's sound effects might come from original recordings or they might be selected from previously recorded sounds. If a scene is set at a seaside cabin, for example, recordists venture to the coast and record the waves lapping against the rocks on the shore. For that sound, a trip to the beach might be skipped if the sound department has its own catalogue of “found sounds” or can locate a workable effects track from another movie in the studio's sound library. The sound of the surf used

Foley artist A member of the sound design team who creates sounds in a studio using various props.



6.44 Filmmakers Terry Gilliam and Terry Jones make us laugh at the artifice of film sound in their 1975 farce *Monty Python and the Holy Grail*. We see King Arthur “riding” en route to another adventure, and the joke is that there are no horses in the scene. Instead we see the Foley artist (at left) producing the sound by clapping coconuts.



6.45 and 6.46 The innocuous, everyday sounds of TV static and a telephone ringing prove terrifying in Gore Verbinski’s *The Ring* (2002).

6-4b Sound Effects and Narrative

Sounds can be purely atmospheric, or they can have a distinct and direct function in the telling of the story. First let’s consider the use of sound effects for atmosphere or setting. In the horror film *The Ring*, Rachel, the investigative reporter who seeks the truth about the mysterious videotape connected with a number of teenagers’ deaths, travels to Whidbey Island off the coast of Washington state. It’s a rainy, coastal place and the sound of the rain and the surf can be heard throughout. The sounds have no immediate narrative function; instead they add to the mysterious setting or atmosphere in which the story takes shape.

Other simple sound effects—the sound of TV static and a phone ringing—are used strategically in the telling of the film’s story (figs. 6.45 and 6.46). The sound of TV static marks the start and end points of the cursed videotape; we hear it when the tape is cued up and then when it’s over (and it’s too late to save the character who has viewed it). And the sound of the telephone ringing cues what follows: a terrifying phone call with a voice giving the listener just seven days to live. Once we know what the voice on the other end of the phone line has to say, just the sound of the phone ringing is enough to remind us of the terrifying scenario.

Many of the film’s horrifying effects are cued by these two simple sound effects. For example, at one point Rachel leaves her son with a babysitter. She comes home to the sound of TV static and predictably freaks out. But the sound, this time at least, is innocuous; the babysitter has fallen asleep and the channel she was watching has gone off the air. This time at least the TV static is just TV static.

The volume, pitch, and timbre of simple sound effects can have a significant narrative function. **Volume** regards degrees of loud and soft and can be used to heighten or reduce tension and to reproduce the intensity of real sounds. **Pitch** refers to the frequency of sound vibrations, described on a scale from high to low (or treble to bass). **Timbre** refers to the harmonic components of sound, what seems to give a sound a certain quality or feeling or, as some sound engineers describe it, color.

In Alfonso Cuarón's futurist film *Children of Men*, variations in volume, pitch, and timbre are used to define locations or settings and then, when they change, to foreshadow narrative events. The former political activist Theo travels from the city to the country—from London, circa 2027, which is a soundscape of constant noise (fig. 6.47), to the hidden forest compound of an old cohort, which is so quiet that one can hear the sound of the wind rustling through the trees and the footfalls of a dog tromping through the fallen leaves on the forest floor (fig. 6.48). The city is characterized by loud-volume, high-pitched sounds of car brakes and horns and a disharmonic timbre that makes us anxious. A marked drop in volume, and deeper and warmer sounds characterize the country retreat, where we experience a momentary sense of peace and calm. When Cuarón introduces loud, trebly, disharmonic noise into the quiet country landscape, the music makes the dramatic point that there is little hope of escape from the pervasive police state and the various terrorist insurgencies in this story's world.

Sound perspective refers to how the sound source is situated in the space of the film. A sound can seem to be near or far, right or left, and so on, depending on a quality that theorists describe as “presence.” This presence is a function of volume, pitch, and timbre. Sound perspective is connected to visual perspective, so that the voices in a close-up, for example, would have more presence than if the characters were speaking from a distance. Sound engineers, recordists, and mixers also

volume The degree of loudness and softness.

pitch The frequency of sound vibrations, described on a scale from high to low (or treble to bass).

timbre The “color,” quality, or feeling of a sound.

sound perspective The use of volume, pitch, and timbre to imply distance or location.

sound cue A musical theme or sound effect that signals the arrival of a character or the performance of an action.



6.47 Sudden bursts of violence seem consistent with the sounds of the city in the grim world of 2027. *Children of Men* (Alfonso Cuarón, 2006).



6.48 The sounds of silence in the country—a lull before the next audio assault.

use effects to create a sense of the scale of a scene's location, another aspect of sound perspective. In *Citizen Kane* (1941), for example, Orson Welles uses an echo effect to aurally match the setting of an argument between Charles and Susan; it is in a hall so vast and empty that sound reverberates. Stereophonic, or multichannel, sound can also be used strategically to situate sounds in space. When, for example, we hear a noise that comes from our left in the movie theater auditorium, we assume that that object—a plane (as in *Lawrence of Arabia*, David Lean, 1962) or helicopter (in *Apocalypse Now*, 1979)—is approaching from that direction with regard to the framed image on-screen.

Sound effects, much like dialogue and music, can be used to tell us what is happening even before we see it on the screen. These kinds of effects are called **sound cues** because, like a stage cue in a play, they signal the imminent arrival of a character or performance of an action.

One common use of sound cues is to create suspense. For example, when a power outage has shut



6.49 Stuck outside the T-Rex cage, waiting for something to happen . . . Tim and Lex in Steven Spielberg's *Jurassic Park* (1993).



6.51 Image plus sound effect equals narrative cue. What else could be shaking the car (and thus stirring the water)? It must be the T-Rex.



6.50 A loud sound literally shakes the ground beneath them. “You feel that?” In a properly equipped theater we should too.



6.52 Sound effects signal the entrance of the T-Rex in *Jurassic Park*.

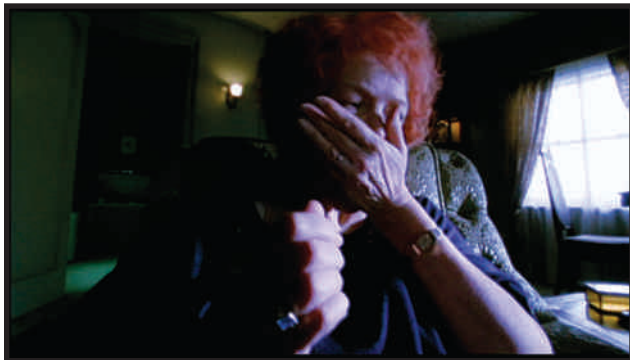
down the Jurassic Park theme park ride, action is briefly suspended (hence the suspense) while the characters, stuck just outside the T-Rex cage, wait for power to be restored. First we see Tim and Lex passing the time in the car: Tim is playing with a pair of night goggles; Lex is acting bored (fig. 6.49). Then they hear a loud thump that shakes the car. Tim climbs over the seat to sit next to his sister. “You feel that?” he asks (fig. 6.50). Next we see as well as hear the power of the sound waves: the water in two glasses stirs (fig. 6.51). The sound effects track gets louder as the steps appear to come closer; here again our reading is guided by sound perspective. The high-pitched shriek of wires snapping and the deep roar of the huge prehistoric animal cue the on-screen debut of the T-Rex (fig. 6.52).

6-4c Distorted Effects

Even a scene as fantastic as the escape of a T-Rex from a dinosaur park is made to appear more realistic by the

sound effects. But when realism is not the goal, sound effects can be used to heighten our attention, to comment upon, or to exaggerate the content of a scene. For example, in *Requiem for a Dream*, the director Darren Aronofsky dramatizes an older woman’s descent into diet pill addiction by matching simple and in reality quiet actions—opening a pill container, shaking out a pill, popping the pill into her mouth, leaning back in her chair—with sound effects that exaggerate in volume, pitch, and timbre these simple sounds. The exaggerated sound effects make clear that this is no innocent procedure; this woman is in serious trouble (figs. 6.53–6.55).

Sounds may be deliberately distorted or muffled to limit our knowledge to what a character can hear and create a sense of mystery or suspense. In *Rosemary’s Baby* (Roman Polanski, 1967), for example, muffled chanting can be heard from the adjacent apartment. At first Rosemary thinks she is just hearing odd noises produced by the kindly old couple living next door. Later she begins to suspect that these neighbors are



6.53–6.55 Exaggerated sound effects dramatize an otherwise simple action (opening a bottle and taking a pill) in Darren Aronofsky's harrowing adaptation of Hubert Selby's *Requiem for a Dream* (2000).

members of a witches' coven, and the same muffled noises suggest sinister rites. At the end of the film, muffled noises from next door convince Rosemary that her baby is not dead.

The muffled sounds in *Rosemary's Baby* introduce a momentary shift in narrative point of view as we experience the situation through Rosemary's limited perspective. We hear only what she hears through the wall separating the two apartments, which makes us want to get better access to the source of the sounds, to know more about who is producing them and why. That desire is the key to our reading of the film. We are oddly hoping throughout that Rosemary is right about these sounds, that she is uncovering the truth (that her neighbors are devil worshippers) and not becoming unhinged as a result of her pregnancy.

Muffled sound effects can also simulate the mental state of a character: In *A Prophet*, Malik is high on heroin as he listens to his Gypsy friend Jordi singing in a prison Christmas show. We hear the song much as we expect Malik hears it in his altered state: muffled and barely audible, as if in a dream.

Absolute silence is another kind of deviation from "normal" film sound. Even when characters are not talking, the setting is quiet, and no background music is used, there is almost always ambient noise, which makes absolute silence so startling. It too may be used to simulate a character's altered state, such as drifting into unconsciousness or experiencing hearing loss after an explosion. *A Prophet* again offers an example: Malik enters a car and starts shooting. The blasts of gunfire—which we hear quite vividly—in such an enclosed space rattle his eardrums, and he briefly goes deaf (fig. 6.56). Because we are meant to experience the scene from Malik's point of view, we cannot hear anything either.



6.56 Sounds of gunfire begin loud, then become muffled, and then disappear in a brief period of total silence as Malik's eardrums are rattled by the sounds of gunfire at close range. *A Prophet* (*Un prophète*, Jacques Audiard, 2009).

6-5 SOUND EDITING AND MIXING

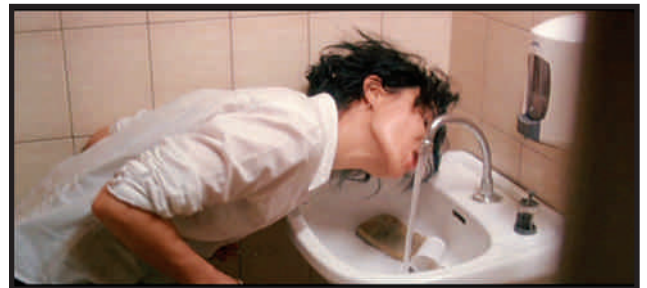
Once the components of the voice, music, and effects tracks are created, the final phases of sound design begin. **Sound editing** is the process by which the components of the voice, music, and effects tracks are chosen and synched, or matched, to the images on-screen. **Sound mixing** is the process through which these separate tracks are combined into a single soundscape, with attention paid to the way that the different perceptual characteristics of sound are balanced. Both sound editing and sound mixing significantly affect our interpretation of the events on-screen.

6-5a Sound Editing

The voice, music, and sound effects tracks are edited in relationship to the image track, which is assembled first. Sometimes the relationship is a precise match—synching moving lips with spoken words, dance steps with musical rhythms, or a slammed door with a loud thud, for example. But the relationship need not be precisely synchronous; sometimes the sounds are edited to complement rather than strictly match the shots. It is important in a nuanced critical approach to film form and style to recognize that image and sound are edited separately and that filmmakers recognize image and sound as two parallel processes, each one important to the overall meaning and impact of the film.

Sound editing can be crucial to a film's overall temporal and spatial scheme. In a fairly simple sequence in Olivier Assayas's *Clean*, for example, a single song plays uninterrupted on the soundtrack while we see a montage of scenes from different moments in Emily's day. The scene is meant to introduce us to her boring life: work, grab a cigarette, take a cigarette break, pop a few pills, get back to work (figs. 6.57–6.59). The duration of the song matches the running time of the montage (approximately 3 minutes), not the length of time that transpires in the world of the story (an 8-hour workday). The goal here is to compress the 8-hour routine into a 3-minute sequence and the music implies a beginning, middle, and end—a complete sequence of actions to match a complete musical number.

In the expository montage in *Clean*, the sound editing links actions that occur at different points in time but in the same basic locale. In the climactic montage in *The Godfather*, sound editing links actions



6.57–6.59 Throughout a montage of images compressing the time passing during Emily's shift at the restaurant, we hear a single, uninterrupted, and unedited song on the music track. *Clean* (Olivier Assayas, 2004).

that occur simultaneously but in different locales. Scenes from the baptism of Michael Corleone's godson, Michael Rizzi, are intercut with scenes from the preparation and execution of a series of assassinations. To make clear the simultaneity of these events and to emphasize the thematic connection between the sacrament of baptism and the murders that are essential to Michael's business plan, Coppola uses a sound bridge. The music from the church organ and

sound editing The process by which the components of the voice, music, and effects tracks are chosen and synched to the images on-screen.

sound mixing The process by which separate tracks are combined into a single soundscape.



6.60 The master shot of the church. While images outside were intercut with images inside the church, the baptism ceremony and accompanying organ music audible in this space plays over both visual fields. *The Godfather* (Francis Coppola, 1972).



6.61 Michael renounces Satan.



6.62 The church organ swells and we see Moe Green assassinated.

the ritual discourse performed by the priest and Michael is heard continuously throughout the sequence, even when the scene on-screen is no longer in the church (fig. 6.60).

The sound editing underscores Michael's hypocrisy, his pretense to being a God-fearing family man when he is in reality a cold-blooded gangster. The call and response between the priest and Michael that is essential to the baptism ritual is intercut with and thus used in counterpoint to the murders. The priest asks, "Do you renounce Satan?" Michael responds (fig. 6.61): "I do renounce him." "And all his works?" the priest asks. As the sound of the church organ swells, we watch a Mafia soldier shoot Moe Green in the eye (fig. 6.62). We then cut to see Cicci lock Cuneo in a revolving door. Accompanying the image, we hear but do not see Michael dutifully reply: "I do renounce them." The line cues Cicci's hit on Cuneo (fig. 6.63) and another gunman's assassination of Philip Tattaglia. We then cut back to the church as the priest intones: "And all his pomps?" to which Michael responds: "I do renounce them." The church organ ascends a scale, and as the music reaches a crescendo, we cut to the parallel action outside as Barzini is shot and tumbles to his death (fig. 6.64).

The final devotional discourse of the baptism is intercut with shots of the bloody aftermath of the murders of Tattaglia, Cuneo, and Barzini, shots to which, thanks to the sound editing, the priest seems to offer benediction: "In nomine Patris, et Filii, et Spiritu Sanctu." Both narratives—in the church and on the streets, on-screen and on the soundtrack—end as they began, in perfect harmony, as the priest blesses the infant. As he does so, he seems to speak as well to the baby's namesake Michael Corleone: "Go in peace and may the Lord be with you. Amen."



6.63 Willi Cicci kills Cuneo.



6.64 As the organ music reaches a crescendo, Don Emilio Barzini is shot.

6-5b Sound Mixing

The three basic sound fields (voice, music, and effects) work in relationship to one another as well as to the image track. The term sound mix refers to the modulation of levels within and between the various components of the soundscape. Typically, one element of the sound mix is highlighted while others might play supporting roles. In the conventional, classical Hollywood sound mix, the voice track is given prominence because talk is the medium's primary source of story information. The goal in such a sound mix is not to create a realistic sonic environment but rather to give the filmgoer easy access to the story information carried by the dialogue.

A good example of the classical Hollywood sound mix can be found in the famous closing scene of

Casablanca as Rick and Ilsa have one last memorable conversation. As they stand face to face but at a distance from the camera, Rick tells Ilsa that he now accepts his role in the coming fight: "What I've got to do, you can't be any part of. Ilsa, I'm no good at being noble, but it doesn't take much to see that the problems of three little people don't amount to a hill of beans in this crazy world" (fig. 6.65). The camera closes in for the payoff line: "Here's looking at *you*, kid . . ." The sound levels don't change to match the camera distance (fig. 6.66); throughout the scene, sound perspective takes a back seat to audible dialogue.

The *Casablanca* sound mix consistently values clear speech over sonic verisimilitude; there is very little background noise, despite the fact that the scene is set at an airport. Not until we cut to a shot of the airplane that will take Ilsa and Victor out of Casablanca do we first hear one and then a second propeller engaged (fig. 6.67). As we cut away from Rick and Ilsa and dialogue abates, the sound mix is dominated by the propellers on the effects track.

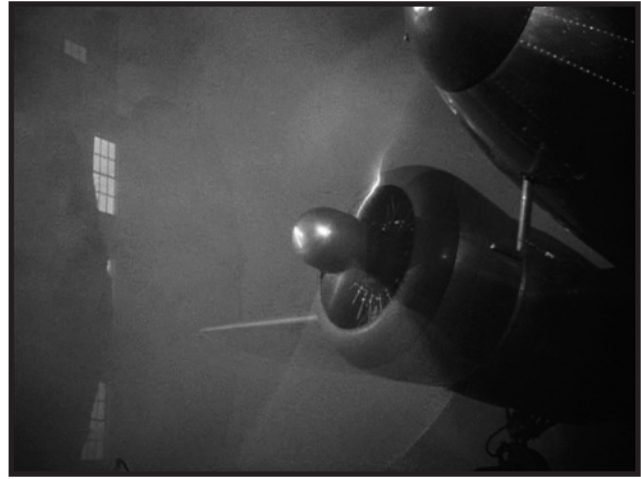
Though the propellers continue to spin, the airplane noise subsides abruptly when we cut back to Vic-

tor, Ilsa, and Rick as they sort out some final details. Victor welcomes Rick "back to the fight." Ilsa recognizes her former paramour's romantic, selfless gesture: "God bless you, Rick." And Rick persists at being noble: "You better hurry or you'll miss that plane." His line cues their exit, but it isn't until Victor and Ilsa turn towards the plane that we hear the propellers at an appropriate volume again. Then as they walk towards the plane, the film's memorable theme, "As Time Goes By" soars on the music track, drowning out the sound of the plane (fig. 6.68).

The sound mix is unrealistic but perfectly modulated to communicate meaning. We hear the significant dialogue. The sound effects of the plane remind us that there's a time issue ("hurry or you'll miss that plane"). And the music that takes us out of the scene reminds us of better times, of what might be lost if we lose the war,



6.65 The classical Hollywood sound mix emphasizes dialogue in the climactic scene of Michael Curtiz's *Casablanca* (1942).



6.67 Suddenly the sound mix is dominated by the sound of the airplane propellers.



6.66 “Here’s looking at you, kid.” We hear the dialogue clearly in an uncluttered sound mix in *Casablanca*.



6.68 The song “As Time Goes By” soars on the music track as Ilsa and Victor exit Casablanca.

of what must be sacrificed (romance, personal happiness) if we are to win.

The classical Hollywood sound mix emphasized audible dialogue over effects, often at the expense of aural realism. Orson Welles, who early in his career worked in radio, a medium composed entirely of sound, departed from this tradition by using radio-based techniques like overlapping dialogue and sound perspective to more realistically situate the listener/filmgoer in the world of the story. In the famous opening tracking shot in *Touch of Evil*, for example, Welles synchronized voice, music, and effects to the camera’s movement, modulating the volume, pitch, and timbre of sounds not to highlight the narrative dialogue track but to match what we’d hear if we moved through the space along with the camera.

Today the dynamic range (the degrees of loud and soft) is wider than in previous decades, but realism is not necessarily the goal. Effects and not dialogue propel contemporary action narratives and the sound mix serves this altered scheme by using quiet mostly as a set up for noisier moments to come. Four films—*Lethal Weapon* (fig. 6.69), *Die Hard* (John McTiernan, 1988), *The Matrix* (Lana and Andy Wachowski, 1999), and *X-Men* (Bryan Singer, 2000)—all produced by the action impresario Joel Silver, illustrate the primacy of loud effects in the contemporary action film’s sound mix. In *Lethal Weapon*, the by now familiar story of a cop on the edge is told through a series of action set-pieces: shootouts, car chases, exploding houses, suicide leaps, and the inevitable *mano a mano* martial arts slugfest at the end. The plotline is at once incoherent and



6.69 One of the many action set-pieces highlighted by a sound mix emphasizing the effects track in *Lethal Weapon* (Richard Donner, 1989).

irrelevant because the point is to follow the cop from one exhilarating event to the next, each punctuated not by dialogue but by dynamic sound effects that accompany the visual pyrotechnics on-screen.

Die Hard fits into much the same pattern, as the hero, another rogue cop, upsets a multimillion-dollar robbery planned and executed by stylish European thieves. The smooth execution of the robbery is interrupted by a series of violent interventions and explosions staged by the hero, who through the course of the movie blows lots of things up. The sound-effects track is here again the film's dynamic barometer; the noisier the interruptions, the more successful we believe the hero to be. And we believe him to be the hero because he presides over all the fire and noise.

One of the narrative challenges of these action films is that the hero is by necessity really hard to kill. Riggs and McLane, the cop heroes of the *Lethal Weapon* and *Die Hard* films, are adept and persistent, and, though human, they are astonishingly resilient.

Neo, the new age hero of the *Matrix* films, is “the one” and thus possesses supernatural physical and mental powers. We’re not sure exactly what it will take to kill him, but routine gunfire is inadequate. The staged effects thus need to be truly big to worry him . . . and us. In the *X-Men*, the mutant heroes and villains have unique abilities, and some, like Wolverine, get hurt but then quickly recover and regenerate. The explosions—the visual and audio effects—are by narrative necessity as well as genre design big and loud because the scope and scale of things in these films is oversized, because the amount of

firepower required to make an impression on these heroes is huge.

The demands of the dynamic sound mix of these contemporary action films have been met by significant developments in sound recording and playback: Dolby, Sony’s SDDS (Sony Dynamic Digital Sound), and Universal’s DTS (Digital Theater Sound). (See chapter 7 for more on how these sound systems work.) The upside of this development is that filmmakers exploit these new and improved sound recording and playback technologies very creatively and in doing so invest more time, interest, and imagination in using sound in postproduction and exhibition. The downside is an ever-increasing dependence on dynamic sound, absent nuance, absent expository dialogue. Also lost is any semblance of the real. The effects tracks in these action films are by design over the top, bigger and louder than life, because the films concern heroes—edgy police officers who defy death, futurist messiahs, and indestructible mutants—that exist only in the movies, and only in action movies.

CHAPTER SUMMARY

Close reading in film requires attention to the variety of sounds that accompany the images on the screen. These sounds are as carefully designed, produced, and edited as the camera shots and are integral to a film's meaning.

6-1 SOUND AND IMAGE

Learning Outcome: *Appreciate the complexity of sound design and some key relationships between sounds and images.*

- Sound that originates from the world of the film is called diegetic sound. Nondiegetic sound generally offers commentary on the action or it establishes mood and tone.
- On-screen sounds originate from sources we can see in the frame. Off-screen sounds originate from sources we cannot see but assume nonetheless to be part of the story world.
- Simultaneous sounds correspond in time with what is happening in the frame. Non-simultaneous sounds bring in voices and other sounds from the past or future.

6-2 THE VOICE TRACK

Learning Outcome: *Analyze how different types of voice recordings (dialogue, voice-over, and direct address) are used to tell a story.*

- Live sound is recorded onto the film and also on a separate medium, which is called double-system recording—an industry standard for live sound capture.
- Direct address implies an awareness on the part of the fictional characters that they are in a film or at least that an audience is watching and listening to them.
- In voice-over narration an off-screen character or narrator speaks to the audience. Voice-over narration is nondiegetic; the narration comments on the story.

6-3 MUSIC

Learning Outcome: *Understand the various uses and functions of music in a film's soundtrack.*

- Musical accompaniment for silent-era films was performed live.
- The score is the principal music track for most movies. Much like opera composers, film composers often use repeated themes or motifs to connect scenes at different points in a film.
- Filmmakers may choose to use previously recorded popular music rather than or in addition to commissioning an original score. Like a score, this music

highlights, punctuates, cues, or comments upon the story as it plays out on-screen.

- Two distinct subgenres of the Hollywood movie musical were introduced early in the sound era: the backstage musical and the musical comedy.

6-4 SOUND EFFECTS

Learning Outcome: *Recognize how sound effects contribute to the experience of watching a film.*

- A movie's sound effects might come from original recordings or they might be selected from previously recorded sounds. When no recorded sound source exists or because the real sound is not effective, the Foley artist simulates the sounds using simple objects.
- The volume, pitch, and timbre of sound effects can have a significant narrative function.
- Sound perspective refers to the use of volume, pitch, and timbre to imply distance or location.
- Distorting, muffling, or silencing sound can be used to heighten our attention, to comment upon or to exaggerate the content of a scene.

6-5 SOUND EDITING AND MIXING

Learning Outcome: *Identify and analyze how sound design affects our interpretation of the events on-screen.*

- Sound editing is the process by which the components of the voice, music, and effects tracks are chosen and synched and/or matched to the images on-screen.
- A sound bridge is used to connect events spread out in time but occurring in the same basic locale or to connect events taking place at the same time but in different locales.
- The sound mix involves the modulation of levels (of volume, pitch, and timbre) within and between the multiple recordings that compose each sound field.
- The conventional, classical Hollywood sound mix highlights dialogue because talk is the medium's primary source of story information.
- In many contemporary action films, the dynamic range (the degrees of loud and soft in the mix) is wider than in previous decades.

FOCUS on Sound: *Nashville*

The director Robert Altman is known for his complex sound mixes that present a realistic soundscape. Unlike most directors, Altman does not highlight dialogue over effects and music (see the sound-mixing example from *Casablanca* above); indeed, he often overlaps dialogue (from one or more conversations) and uses sound to place the viewer inside the purportedly real space of the film. In the first image below from his 1975 film *Nashville* (85 minutes into the film), we find Albuquerque, yet another aspiring country singer trying to make it in Music City, USA, performing at a stock car race. We have waited a long time to hear her sing (to see if she indeed has what it takes), but we can't hear her very well over the sound of car engines. The sound mix keeps us from hearing precisely what we want or need to hear in the scene. The second image comes from the end of the film (at the 152-minute mark), as Albuquerque takes the stage again. This time we hear her, and she's really good. Her big chance comes at the most unfortunate of moments (an on-stage assassination), but she nonetheless makes the most of it. The sound mix is once again complex. Altman highlights her voice (which after all is amplified on-stage) and uses it as a sound bridge to carry into the final credits.



Albuquerque takes the stage (1:25:00–1:25:30)

Music: What should be the loudest sound field in the mix—Albuquerque's singing—is the one we cannot hear very well. True to the reality of the scene—a singer getting her first big break singing at a stock car race—the guitarist and the singer are muffled and barely audible. Here Altman wrings humor out of the absurdity of the scene (a singer trying to perform a song at a stock car race) with a comically absurd (but nonetheless realistic) sound mix.

Voice: We hear clearly the sound of the raceway announcer calling the race. His voice is amplified over the raceway's public address system. The actor's line reading includes a pronounced Southern accent (to set the location), and it is carefully and clearly modulated to simulate a play-by-play commentary at such a scene. The sound is diegetic but comes from a source off-screen.



Albuquerque takes the stage again (2:32:11–2:37:00)

Music: In this scene at the end of the film, we finally hear Albuquerque sing. She's really good, better than most of the country music stars whose performances precede her in the film. The impromptu song she performs functions at once to quell a riot (a country music legend has been assassinated by a crazed young man) and to re-establish the setting: Nashville, Music City, etc. The song's refrain, "It Don't Worry Me," speaks to the events on-screen. We've just seen a murder that should worry us of course, but the point here (however we take it) is that the spirit of Nashville embodied in this music cannot be thwarted or silenced.

Voice: Typical of Altman, we hear a variety of conversations only partially and distinctly mixed "under" (softer than) the music. When Altman cuts to these conversations, we continue to hear Albuquerque sing but do not see her. During these moments when the music track is diegetic but off-screen, we see and hear dialogue that is at once diegetic and on-screen. Typical of Altman, he also mixes in diegetic, off-screen dialogue. This is mixed at a volume well below the volume of the music.



Albuquerque takes the stage (1:25:00–1:25:30)

Effects: The loudest sounds in the mix are the racing car engines. The sound is diegetic but comes from a source off-screen.

Sound perspective: The cars are loud and Altman modulates the volume of the engines to simulate the cars' movement around the track (louder when they are close to where the camera is placed on one side of the track and then somewhat softer when they are farther away). This use of sound perspective adds to the comic effect of the scene, as Albuquerque's on-stage movement seems to accompany these changes in volume.



Albuquerque takes the stage again (2:32:11–2:37:00)

Effects: We hear footsteps on-stage and crowd noise in the background. In the scene at the racetrack, the effects track was the loudest. Here it is the softest.

Sound perspective: The song, with its simple refrain, proves infectious and the other performers, musicians, and finally the crowd join in. As the camera moves back and away from the stage (a familiar gesture at the end of a film), we see the entire crowd (composed of people of different colors and generations) brought together, soothed by the music. As the camera moves back and away, Altman subtly increases the volume of the crowd's singing and decreases the volume of Albuquerque's singing. At the end, he holds on an image of a cloud-dappled sky and then increases the volume of Albuquerque's voice as he slowly decreases the volume of the crowd. He then fades out as we cut to black—and silence—at the end.

ANALYZE SOUND

Use these questions to analyze how the basic elements of sound recording, editing, and mixing contribute to the story content of a film. For a close analysis, it is better to pick a single scene. Begin by thinking about the overall effect of the sound design, and then focus on individual components.

- What do you learn about the story and characters from the sound design alone?
- What emotional effect does the sound design have on you?

6-1 SOUND AND IMAGE

- Take note of all the distinct sounds you hear.
- Which sounds originate from the world of the film (diegetic)? Which sounds are nondiegetic?
- How do the nondiegetic sounds affect your view of the scene? How might you read the scene differently if the sound were diegetic only?
- Do any sounds originate off-screen? If so, how do they affect your reading of the scene?
- Do any sounds extend from an earlier or later scene? How does that sound bridge connect story elements from the two scenes?

6-2 THE VOICE TRACK

- Take note of all of the individual voice tracks, especially dialogue and voice-over.
- How do the actors' line readings affect your reading of the scene?
- Is there a moment of direct address? If so, how does it affect the tone and meaning of the scene?
- Is there any voice-over? What sort of commentary does it provide?

6-3 MUSIC

- Take note of all the instances and sources of music.
- Describe the general qualities of the musical score. How does the score affect your reading of a specific scene? Of the film as a whole?
- Are musical motifs used in the telling of the film story? If so, how?
- Do you recognize any previously recorded music in the film? If so, how is it used? Does it comment on the action in any way? What does it contribute to the mood and tone?

6-4 SOUND EFFECTS

- Take note of all the distinct sound effects.
- Do these effects (taken together) contribute to your impression of the setting as real?
- Are sound effects used to build suspense or provide cues?
- Are there instances of distorted or muffled sound effects? How are these used in the telling of the story?

6-5 SOUND EDITING AND MIXING

- Which component of the sound mix is most prominent—voice, music, or effects? Why?
- How do the dynamics of the sound mix—the range of highs and lows—affect your experience of the action?
- Is silence used at any time in the film?